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Bay State Farmers' Market Season Begins with a Record
Number of New Locations

State's Top Agricultural Official Kicks Off a Tour of Local Markets and
Promotion of new "Ag Tag" License Plate

BOSTON – It's that time of year again, when picking up groceries on the way home from work doesn't have to mean a stop at the supermarket. This year's farmers' market season is off to its strongest start yet, with a record 23 new farmers' markets – the most ever added in a single year.

To mark the record-breaking year, Department of Agricultural Resources (DAR) Commissioner Doug Petersen and other state officials plan to tour some of the Commonwealth's farmers' markets starting Saturday, June 14, and continuing through August.

"The huge increase in the number of market locations shows us that the move to grow local and buy locally grown produce has caught on," Commissioner Petersen said.

Massachusetts-grown fruits and vegetables are cropping up in farmers' markets across the state, providing consumers with fresh produce and an array of locally-prepared foods right in their own communities. Most of the state's 162 farmers' markets are already open, with others set to open between now and early July. Most remain open through Thanksgiving week. A complete schedule is attached.

Besides offering fresh, healthy, nutritious foods, Petersen said the local farmers' market provides a central location for community residents to gather, socialize and even swap recipes.

Communities and locations welcoming new markets this year include: Allston, Bedford, Bernardston, Boston Medical Center, Dedham, Deerfield, Dorchester at Bowdoin Square, Dorchester at Codman Square, Dracut, East Boston, Fairhaven, Falmouth, Hadley, Newburyport, Pepperell, Pittsfield, Princeton, Plymouth's Court Square, Sandwich, Shelburne Falls, Westfield, Winchester and Worcester/Main South.

To keep the farmers' markets coming back year after year, DAR officials encourage citizens to consider purchasing an "Ag Tag," the Commonwealth's newest specialty license plate. Proceeds from "Ag Tag" sales support local agricultural organizations and new programs and services for farmers.

DAR recently launched a spring 2008 "Ag Tag" sales campaign in an effort to secure the 1,500 reservations needed before the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) will begin producing the plate, which features the tagline "*Go Locally Grown*." The initial cost to transfer registration to an "Ag Tag" is \$40. There is an additional \$20 exchange fee when the actual plate is picked up from the RMV, and renewals are \$81 every two years (\$41 RMV registration fee and \$40 for the specialty plate fee that continues to go to the Trust Fund). A reservation form can be downloaded at <http://www.mass.gov/agr/agtag/index.htm>.

To help consumers find nearby markets, the DAR lists market schedules, locations, times, and opening and closing dates at www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/farmers_markets.htm.

The following is a complete list of Commissioner Petersen's tour stops:

- Saturday June 14th - Great Barrington Farmers' Market, Castle Street @ 9:30 a.m.
- Saturday June 14th - Berkshire Area Farmers' Market, Lanesborough, Berkshire Mall Parking Lot, Rte. 8 @ 12 p.m.
- Tuesday June 24th – Springfield, Farmers' Market at the X, Trinity Church Parking Lot, 361 Sumner Ave. @ 1 p.m.
- Tuesday July 8th – Newton Farmers' Market, Cold Spring Park, 1200 Beacon St. @ 3 p.m.

- Saturday July 12th – Amherst Farmers’ Market, Town Common @ 8:30 a.m.
- Saturday July 12th – Greenfield Farmers’ Market, Court Square next to Town Hall @ 11 a.m.
- Monday July 14th – Worcester/Westside Farmers’ Market, Beaver Brook Park, 306 Chandler St. @ 11 a.m.
- Wednesday July 16th – Hyannis/Mid-Cape Farmers’ Market, 500 Block Main St. @ 10 a.m.
- Friday July 18th – Dartmouth Farmers’ Market, Rex Field adjacent to St. Peter’s Church, 351 Elm St. @ 2 p.m.
- Thursday July 24th – Plymouth Farmers’ Market, Stephen’s Field off Rte. 3A @ 3 p.m.
- Saturday August 16th – Marblehead Farmers’ Market, at the Marblehead Middle School, Vine St. @ 10 a.m.
- Monday August 18th – City Hall Plaza Farmers’ Market, Boston @ 12:30 p.m.

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